**Robert Kennedy Papers**

# Soviets Sought Talk With JFK After Vote

By Richard M. Weintraub 3/1/74

Special to The Washington Post

WALTHAM, Mass., Feb. 28—The Soviet Union apparently sought to develop close and high-level contacts with John F. Kennedy after his election and before he took office as President.

In a memorandum from Robert Kennedy to Secretary of State-designate Dean Rusk on Dec. 18, 1960, the President-elect's brother gave details of a discussion between him and Soviet Ambassador Mikhil Menshikov, which had taken place on Dec. 12 at the ambassador's request.

The memorandum was one of several thousand documents of the late Robert Kennedy opened to researchers at the John F. Kennedy Library. The Robert Kennedy collection is one of a large number of sets of papers which compliment the presidential files at the library.

Additional segments of the Robert Kennedy papers will be opened as the library's archivists process them.

During the luncheon meeting between Robert Kennedy and the Ambassador, Menshikov claimed that the Soviet position on a number of vital world issues, including Berlin and disarmament had been "misconstrued or distorted" by "lower-echelon" negotiators in the U.S. government. He urged an early meeting between the President-elect and Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev.

"Mr. Menshikov said that Mr. Khruschev was extremely anxious to meet personally with President-elect Kennedy. He said that many of the problems could be resolved in personal discussion," Robert Kennedy wrote.

Kennedy said he told Menshikov it was the President-elect's position that no summit meetings would be useful until there were agreements on a lower level. Menshikov replied to this by asking for a meeting with the President-elect himself, or at least for a meeting with a representative of the new administration, for informal discussions.

"He said that he was sure that they could reach agreements which would be most helpful to the cause of world peace — even on the question of Berlin," Robert Kennedy wrote. "He said that he foresaw no barrier to resolving the difficulties between the two countries, that the Soviet Union had no objection to Berlin remaining free under the United Nations."

Menshikov said that he felt the Soviet position on Berlin, and on other issues, had been distorted. He indicated he believed some of this distortion had been purposefully done by lower-level U.S. officials in their reports to superiors.

Robert Kennedy told Rusk he had reported his conversation to the President-elect and had telephoned Menshikov to say that Kennedy had expressed interest in the idea "but it was a question of working out the details."

Robert Kennedy said he told Menshikov he would be back in touch with him shortly on the matter. There is no indication in the files whether or when another meeting took place.

The bulk of the files opened earlier this week deal with the 1959-60 presidential campaign and illustrate the careful planning and close attenton to fine detail by the Kennedy team.

For the student of politics of the historians of the perod, they will provide rich detail of the way the Kennedy campaign was structred and the intense effort which went into such matters as voter registration, contacts with potential delegates, the major primaries, the Democratic National Convention and, of course, the campaign against Richard Nixon.

Dear Arthur, I have a WaPost 3/1/74 story, "Soviets Sought Talk With JFK After Vote" that will interest you, as any reporting you may have seen will interest me for Tiger. Richard M. Weintraub reports on several thousand RFK documents in the JFK library, so these are now available...I believe accurately, the Soviets said that "lower-echelon" people had an interest in seeing to it that "a number of vital issues" were "misconstrued and distorted." This one memo in particular, of 12/18/60, RFK to Rusk, should be of great interest. BM 3/10/74. P.S. I have the NYTimes report on the new Khruschev tapes. I also got yesterday's Times from Lesar, who was here.